IN THE SPECIFICATION

Amend the specification as follows.

Page 1, after the title, insert the folowing new paragraph:

The present application is a divisional of U.S. application Serial No. 09/566,266, filed May 5, 2000, which is a continuation of PCT/EP98/07105, filed November 6, 1998, which designated the U.S.

Page 22, delete the paragraph spanning lines 16-21, and insert the following therefor:

In a second series of 23 sera derived from chronic hepatitis C patients who were long-term responders to interferon-alpha treatment and 3 HCV infected chimpanzees, E1 and E2 antibodies were tested. Eighteen out of 23 samples (78%) reacted with recombinant E1s protein, expressed and purified from mammalian cells as described in PCT/EP95/03031. Nine samples (39%) reacted with the C4V6 region, another 9 (39%) with the V1V2 region, and 3 with V2V3 (Table 4). For comparative purposes peptide V5, ie SQLFTISPRRHETVQD (SEQ ID NO:39), is shown.

Page 25, delete the paragraph spanning lines 12-24, and insert the following therefor:

LINTNGSWHINRTALNCNDSLHTGFLASLFYTHSF (SEQ ID NO:40), and similar useful variants e.g. based on a genotype 3a sequence, could be synthesized and tested for reactivity. It should be noted that the HCV E2 protein may contain insertions or deletions in any given HCV genotype. For example, while subtype 1a and 1b sequences show contiguous sequences which can be aligned without having to insert

gaps, HCV type 2a isolates encode E2 proteins which are 4 aa's longer as compared t type 1 sequences. For example, 2 additional amino acids are inserted in HCV type 2a and 2b sequences around hypervariable region II (HVR II). Therefore, a potentially useful variant of peptide HVRII, based on the HC-J6 prototype 2a sequence, would be RSIEAFRVGWGALQYEDNVTNPEDMRPYCW (SEQ ID NO:41), which is a 30-mer peptide while the subtype 1b sequence-based peptide depicted in Table 1 (SEQ ID NO:20) is only 28 aa's long. The two glutamates (symbol E) which are inserted in the subtype 2a sequence are shown underlined. Similar peptides can be easily constructed based on sequences and alignments previously published (e.g. Maertens and Stuyver, 1997).

Insert the attached Sequence Listing after the figures.